

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Tharp et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,174,190) and Tsuji et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,330, 366).

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended to emphasize that the connectors are *axially* connected and that the operative portion of the actuator projects out of the recess far enough to be *transversely* manipulated. Support for these claim amendments may be found throughout the specification as filed. For example, it is abundantly clear from a reading of the specification and consideration of the drawings that the male and female parts are adapted to move axially for connection and disconnection. For example, page 4, line 24 to page 5, line 4, of the specification states that "the male connector of Figure 2 is inserted (with the end 26 foremost) into the opening 12 of the female connector shown in Figure 1, entering from the rightward side (the only way it can enter)." Similarly, transversal movement of the actuator is also clearly inherent in that the strap 74 extends outwardly of the recess 80, so that it can be manipulated by "upward movement" to push the tongue 32 toward the main body of the connector 22, as explained at page 5, line 29 to page 6, line 4, of the specification.

Each of the cited references, Tharp and Tsuji, discloses an actuator (slide rail 55 in Tharp and unlocking member C in Tsuji) that is adapted to be manipulated in an *axial direction* relative to the connection of male and female connector parts. By way of contrast, the actuator (70, 84 or 120) of the present invention is adapted to move *transversely*. The advantage of this configuration is a greatly simplified design (and consequential cost reduction) relative to the axially-operated actuators of the prior art.

CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons detailed above, it is respectfully submitted that all claims remaining in the application (Claims 1-11) are in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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